

O. N. E.

ORTHODOX NEW ENGLAND

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Right: 'Snack Packs for Back Packs' for the Woodbury Food Bank were assembled by the youth of Christ the Savior Church after Divine Liturgy on Sunday, September 8.
Photo: Nick Yuschak

Special collection boxes were available, throughout the prior month, for donations of healthy snack foods and drinks for school children by our parishioners and friends. The Woodbury Food Bank is one of several ways Christ the Savior Church ministers to the needy by reaching out to the less fortunate on an ongoing basis.

Nick Yuschak's photo journal of events at Christ the Savior continues throughout this issue.



Diocesan Assembly 2019

This year's Diocesan Assembly was shaped by profound desire for leadership: grieving the loss of His Eminence, our Archbishop Nikon, welcoming His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, as our locum tenens, and calling for greater accountability in the face of a challenging future.

We began with a prayer service followed by memorial prayers for Archbishop Nikon, Archpriest Steven, M. Eva Kopcha and Thomas Shakun, father of M. Cindy Voytovich.

Metropolitan Tikhon in his report continued on this theme. He ex-

pressed gratitude for the life of Archbishop Nikon and for those who ministered to him in illness and who participated in the funeral services. As our new locum tenens, he is grateful that chancellor Fr. John Kreta kept him informed as His Eminence's decline became more pronounced. This coordination enabled His Beatitude to make visits, notably to the Northern Deanery this summer.

Metropolitan Tikhon does not intend his interim role to extend unduly, but we need to allow full time to

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Winter Clothing Give Away at All Saints of America

Hope Mongeau

What a blessing it is to help the needy! Members of All Saints of America Orthodox Church in Salisbury, Connecticut realized this on Saturday, November 9th. Dozens of local families took advantage of our huge collection of winter wear. We estimated that between 2,000 and

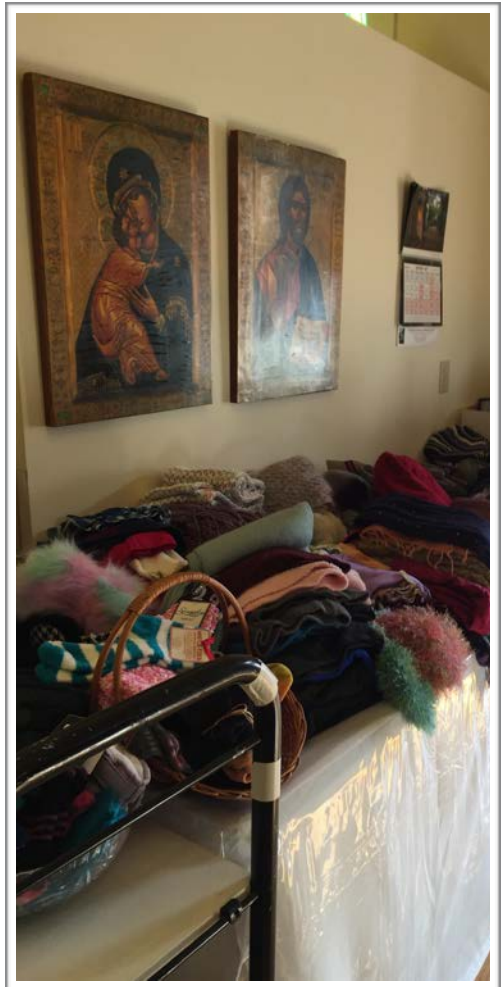
3,000 articles of clothing were donated or purchased for our annual fall event to help those in need. It was a great success and so rewarding to see the happy grateful faces of folks as they carried away huge bagfuls of clothing.

“Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord” (Proverbs 19:17)

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Right: Assembled donations for All Saints of America’s clothing drive.



Assembly from I

mourn our archpastor. His Beatitude's role is limited to "holding the place" (the literal meaning of "locum tenens") until a new bishop can be elected. But we must be flexible and allow the life of diocese to continue. This requires leadership of the whole diocese, the deaneries, and each parish. Later in his report, Metropolitan Tikhon made clear his expectation that all important diocesan matters be brought first to the dean, then to the diocesan chancellor, and finally things that require episcopal action to His Beatitude.

His Beatitude also wants to hear about the needs, hopes, challenges and opportunities in the diocese. We want to assess the state of the diocese, while not being mired in self doubt and fear. He noted that the parish of St. Mary, Waterbury, had to tear down their property—a traumatic experience. But the experience allows us a chance to reflect how we

may allow rebirth not just in that parish but in the whole church.

Metropolitan Tikhon highlighted our approach to the 50th anniversary of granting autocephaly to the Orthodox Church in America. This is an opportunity for us to ask what we need to adjust, what is going well, and what needs re-examining. We need to find practical yet Christ-centered solutions to challenges. We often speak of going to others, of being fishers of men. But nothing will stick without our first transforming our life. It's not so much exactly what we do, but the face that is revealed as we do them.

His Beatitude was asked how we live out the meaning of our autocephaly. He responded it requires going to all Churches, especially those that don't recognize we are autocephalous, and explaining what our life is.

Right: Anchors Aweigh and I'll have two scoops please!

On Sunday, September 22, Christ the Savior Church started their Live Wires Education program with the Annual Ice Cream Social. This year they added the First Rain Gutter Regatta. It was great fun and a definite repeat for next year.

Photo: Matushka Suzanne Aleandro



Metropolitan Tikhon said, “We are planted here in North America and we have a mandate to preserve the witness of Orthodox Faith on this continent, working with all Orthodox Christians. Not being absorbed by another patriarchate but working toward full canonical resolution of the state of Orthodoxy in America. It’s a mystery and we need to be humble in each relationship.”

He added, “Our vision for canonical resolution is to have broad autocephaly that includes everyone. In the words of Archbishop Alexander, we exist as an autocephalous Church to die, so that a greater autocephalous Church would arise. The problem is that this is not the vision of the rest of the churches here in America.”

Metropolitan Tikhon further commented, “If we use a melting pot metaphor, we see some places where the fire is not hot enough, or not enough being put in, or no one is stirring it all together. We need to work at how to strengthen dialogue. Christ

never expressed the kind of human rage we find filling the world around us. The ascetical life of church is not just about prayer and fasting but humbling the mind: being willing to actually talk at length with someone, and if we cannot come to common understanding, then wait.”

Chancellor’s Report

Fr. John Kreta, Chancellor of the Diocese of New England, began by recalling how Archbishop Nikon would always tell him to give his blessing to those the chancellor met and that he loved them. He also affirmed that Fr. Steven Belonick was a great example as a priest in our diocese even for short time.

He is grateful for the attentive work of His Beatitude in our diocese already begun. But he also shared that while His Beatitude visited Alaska, he made sure Archbishop Michael was able to preside in his place at the funeral of Fr. Steven. He will continue to be a faithful archpastor.

Right: We are always ready to learn! Father Moses launches the first day of classes, for our Live Wires Education program, with a special prayer and a blessing for the students and their teachers.

Photo: Nick Yuschak



2020 Diocesan Grant Program



The 2020 "Diocesan Grant Guidelines" and "Diocesan Grant Application" are available on the Diocesan website at www.dneoca.org.

Parishes in the New England Diocese can apply for financial grants to help support outreach and charity programs in their communities. The diocese has budgeted up to \$10,000 in 2020 for grant monies to support parishes in these efforts.

Applications will be reviewed as received. Check the website for details.

Fr. Kreta noted a large number of transitions in the past year. Father Michael Westerberg was granted retirement, while Fr. James Robinson transferred to the Bulgarian Archdiocese. Fr. Steven Voytovich has been welcomed back to serve in New Haven. Fr. John Jillions has begun his service in Bridgeport. Fr. Moses Locke was ordained and assigned to Southbury as Fr. Vladimir Aleandro retired. Likewise, Fr. Peter Carmichael retired and Fr. Mircea Geana was assigned to Springfield, Vt.

Fr. John Hopko, after fifteen years of sacrificial leadership, has stepped down as diocesan youth director, Fr. Kreta reported, expressing deep gratitude for his service. Fr. Moses already has taken up the role and is working on organizing the 2020 Youth Rally and other youth events in coming year.

Fr. Kreta turned to the need for strategic planning in the diocese. We have lost half of our membership in the last ten years. We have opened only one mission in the last twenty five years. He cited these facts, he said, "not to discourage, but rather to inspire us to put our hand to the plow. Vast numbers in New England are not the member of any church. The harvest is great. Our vision must not be about protecting what we have, but reaching for more." At the same time, he said, "The diocese is us and is something we are all responsible for." We all need to ask, how can our parish help the diocese and how can the diocese help each parish?

ONE Stewards

Protodeacon Paul Nimchek announced that all money donated for youth ministry has been reserved for 2020, given the cancellation of this year's Youth Rally. He also shared

that His Eminence, Archbishop Nikon had given \$10,000 toward ONE Stewards.

Youth Ministry

Fr. Moses Locke thanked Fr. John Hopko for his extraordinary leadership. He then announced Youth Rally is set for Aug. 9, 2020. The Diocese of New England has committed to joint ministry with the Antiochian Archdiocese to host events throughout the year, culminating in Rally. The first event would be taking place in Worcester on the weekend of Nov. 15, 2019. Metropolitan Tikhon also offered the idea of a youth retreat at Saint Tikhon Monastery.

Strategic Planning

Fr. Steven Hosking led the featured program of the Assembly, a workshop on strategic planning. He explained that strategic planning asks four questions: Why do we exist? Where are we now? Where do we want to be? How do we get there?

He offered a six-step work plan for our diocese. First, establish a mission statement for the diocese, defining who we are, what we do, and why. Second, assess internal Strengths and Weaknesses, and external Opportunities and challenges or Threats (SWOT). Third, identify the core values, what is most important to our diocese and our parishes. Fourth, clarify a vision which defines what we hope to accomplish in the future. Fifth, develop a strategy, a roadmap to implement our vision. Sixth, set concrete and achievable goals to accomplish the strategy over time.

Fr. Hosking explained he had conducted a survey of our parishes to prepare for this presentation. It was organized to reveal weaknesses and threats (from the SWOT model pre-

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dneoca.org

viously mentioned), where most did not agree with certain positive statements about parish life. Fr. Hosking found the points of disagreement revealing: leaders offer adequate support to volunteers; the parish offers a wide variety of opportunities to volunteer; the parish plays an active role in the life of the community in which it's located.

Strategic planning is of the Gospel, Fr. Hosking said. It identifies stumbling blocks preventing the mission of the Church. He cited Acts 6, which shows the apostles finding Hebrews and Greeks divided, and so they ordained deacons so that the apostles could continue to preach and teach the Gospel. For the diocese, we can see that something is blocking our mission, since we have lost half our membership in ten years.

The Assembly had an extended discussion on the question of strategic planning. Some doubted that there is any need for it. Others were concerned that our diocese has attempted plans in the past but there has been too little accountability. We heard appeals for paid staffing of the diocese: a full or half-time chancellor, or some other paid assistant to the bishop. Several questioned whether we have a functioning diocese beyond the person of the bishop.

The strategic planning presentation continued on the second day of the Assembly. Fr. Hosking explained the planning process. He will assemble a select committee of volunteers from the Assembly, not including any members of the Diocesan Council except for himself and our chancellor Fr. Kreta. [Since the Assembly, that group has been selected and has begun its work.] They will start by examining what is the mission of the diocese. They will evaluate SWOT in

conjunction with the initial parish survey. They will gather background materials. And they will share what they find on the Diocese of New England website. They aim to have a draft document to share at next Assembly in Salem, Mass.

Grant programs

Protodeacon Paul Nimchek reminded the Assembly that the diocese makes annual grants to parishes who propose outreach programs. The three 2019 recipients made reports. Fr. Patrick Burns described Three Saints Vacation Church School. They were given double their request, a blessing that enabled them to increase advertising and make investments that will last for years to come. The theme of the camp was liturgy this year. It was the first year they actually served liturgy at the camp. It went beautifully and they have committed to continue the service in future years. Some unchurched families have been moved to participate in local parishes now. Almost sixty children attended.

Christ the Savior, Southbury, held the last Bible Lecture Series with Fr. Paul Tarasi. They welcomed 36 participants including an Anglican bishop.

Deacon Gregory Uhrin reported on a grant to produce a TV commercial for three parishes in the Burlington, Vt., market. They reached 300,000 viewers with hundreds of airings in September and October. They are considering a second spot interviewing newly-received Orthodox Christians, so they can speak to their own experience to the uninitiated. These interviews could be developed into a thirty minute cable spot.

The first day concluded with Vespers at St. Alexis Church, Clinton,

Right: FORCC, the Fellowship of Orthodox Churches of Connecticut, held its 26th Annual Benefit Banquet on Sunday, October 6 at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Bridgeport.

Mark Yuschak was one of two student recipients of this year's Memory of George Hallas Award Scholarship presented at the banquet. Mark is pursuing a degree in Architecture at Marywood University in Scranton, PA.

FORCC Treasurer, Alexia Tassmer and FORCC President, Nina Kosowsky look on as Mark accepts the award.

Photo: Richard Kendall

Conn. At its close, Fr. Steven Voytovich rejoiced that His Beatitude was presiding at this service and the Assembly on the 25th anniversary of the founding of the parish. He also recognized Deacon Timothy Skuby, who years ago wrote as his MBA thesis a five year plan for establishing the mission, which was then implemented.

His Beatitude presided at the the Divine Liturgy on Saturday. At the Little Entrance, he explained that Archbishop Nikon had put forward both Fr. Patrick Burns and Fr. Theophan Whitfield for the gold cross. In addition, Deacon Zachary Wasuta's name was also brought to the Holy Synod by Archbishop Nikon for elevation to the rank of Protodeacon. Metropolitan Tikhon honored all three.

At the conclusion of the service, Metropolitan Tikhon reflected on the joy of the canonization of St. Alexis by the autocephalous Orthodox Church in America and how this mission was founded shortly thereafter. Twenty five years later we celebrate its anniversary. He observed that its founding pastor, former dean of St. Tikhon's Seminary, Fr. Steven Voytovich, is now serving here at the Assembly as choir director. "You haven't made it until

you become choir director," he concluded to laughter. He awarded gramotas honoring and thanking Fr. Voytovich as first pastor, Fr. Steven Hosking as current pastor, and the members of St. Alexis for their years of faithful service. His Beatitude noted these were signed by the Holy Synod, including Archbishop Nikon of blessed memory.

Budget

The diocesan budget is not normally a topic of controversy, but this year many were concerned whether the diocese is adequately staffed. Treasurer John Skrobat observed that the proposed budget has inherent uncertainty: if we are responsible for supporting our new bishop on our own, that would increase our budget \$75,000.

Delegates called for greater diocesan funding of leadership. We heard recommendations for paid staff, but Metropolitan Tikhon advised this was premature, since we do not have a candidate for bishop of New England identified yet, who would need to guide staffing in his diocese. At the same time, it was clear there is strong interest in supporting the staffing of our diocese. Many were concerned

that the diocese lacks staff that ensures decisions are actually carried out. A motion was passed to authorize the Diocesan Council to spend up to \$60,000 to ensure the draft of a strategic plan is presented to them by their August meeting.

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Upcoming Events

Feb 25

Deadline for the next issue of the ONE.

May 2

Diocesan Youth Retreat at Christ the Savior, Southbury

Aug 9-15

**Diocesan Youth Rally/Antiochian Archdiocesan Camp
(More details coming soon!)**